

DAILY BULLETIN

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BUSH CONGRATULATES VOTERS, CANDIDATES IN RECENT IRAQI ELECTIONS

President congratulates Iraqis for defying terrorist threats to democracy

Following is the text of a statement released by the White House February 13 congratulating those who voted and those who ran for office in the recent elections in Iraq:

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

February 13, 2005

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Two weeks ago, more than eight million Iraqis defied terrorists and went to the polls. The world saw long lines of Iraqi men and women voting in a free and fair election for the first time in their lives. The United States and our Coalition partners can all take pride in our role in making that great day possible.

Today, the provisional results of the election have been announced. We still await their review and certification. I congratulate the Iraqi people for defying terrorist threats and setting their country on the path of democracy and freedom. And I congratulate every candidate who stood for election and those who will take office once the results are certified.

U.S.-EUROPEAN RELATIONS READY FOR "NEW CHAPTER," RICE SAYS

Secretary notes "positive conversations" on Iraq, Afghanistan

Wrapping up a visit to Israel, the West Bank and eight European countries, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice says U.S.-European relations are ready to start a "new chapter."

Speaking to reporters on her plane February 10 en route to Shannon, Ireland, Rice said everyone she spoke to during her trip was ready to try to "turn a new page" after the difficulties of dissent regarding Afghanistan and Iraq.

"Everywhere, people were talking about the way forward. There really wasn't much discussion of what we've been through and [there was] really an acknowledgement that we've got a big agenda ahead of us," Rice said.

Between February 3 and February 10, Rice visited the United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, Turkey, Italy, France, Belgium and Luxembourg, as well as Israel and the West Bank. Rice's trip was intended to promote President Bush's agenda in advance of his trip to Europe February 22-25. She predicted that the president is "going to find a very constructive environment there."

Regarding North Korea's announcement that it is dropping out of Six-Party Talks aimed at ending its nuclear weapons program, Rice said the United States would be consulting with the leadership of South Korea, Japan, China and Russia. She noted the South Korean foreign minister would be in Washington February 14 and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld would be having talks with the Japanese within a week.

The Six-Party Talks, she said, "are the best and most reliable way for them [North Korea] to get on a better path, and we are going to continue to urge them to do it."

Regarding the Middle East, Rice acknowledged that "it is very hard to see how the democratization of the Middle East is going to take place," but she added, "it's a lot harder to imagine the status quo lasting."

Democracy in that part of the world, she said, is "going to happen at different speeds in different places." But dictatorships offer only "a false stability," and a

"freedom deficit" leads to "a kind of malignancy like al Qaeda," she warned.

TESTING KEY TO MEETING AIDS TREATMENT GOALS, SAYS U.S. OFFICIAL

CSIS report calls for increased testing and counseling

By Daniel Cain
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Increased HIV/AIDS testing is essential if the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is to meet its goals for prevention and treatment of the disease in the developing world, says Caroline Ryan, senior technical adviser for prevention in the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator.

Ryan was a panel member discussing "Expanded HIV Testing" at the release of a new report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington February 9. She said a marked increase in such testing and counseling is needed in order to meet the PEPFAR goal of providing support and treatment for 2 million people in five years.

CSIS is a private, nonpartisan, nonprofit think tank based in Washington.

According to Ryan, the United States made significant progress in the past year in the fight against HIV/AIDS around the world, including testing almost 2 million people, establishing 2,000 new HIV/AIDS testing and counseling facilities, and training 14,000 staff members. She acknowledged, however, that this is "not sufficient to [treat] the number of people we're estimating need to be placed on anti-retroviral therapy."

Ryan cited the recent allocation of \$32 million in additional funds for testing and counseling in African countries and in other developing countries as a sign that the United States is acting to address the "phenomenal number of people" who need HIV/AIDS testing.

Millions of potential HIV/AIDS victims - whose numbers she called "incredibly sobering" -- are still to be

tested to reach PEPFAR goals, she told her audience, even as the project is well on its way to meeting its June 2005 goals. New initiatives are needed for this success to continue, she said.

The implementation of routine HIV/AIDS testing, or client-initiated voluntary counseling and testing, in which the testing becomes part of routine check-ups and doctor visits, could help meet testing goals, Ryan said. Integrating HIV/AIDS testing into services offered by existing clinics that treat other diseases, such as tuberculosis, is another tactic being used by the United States, she added.

There are many challenges involved in such a substantial increase in testing, Ryan said. Over-reliance on health care providers who have not been properly trained in counseling and testing methods can produce negative results. "There is a lot of stigma ... and mixed messages that providers themselves are putting out there," she warned.

Phillip Nieburg, a CSIS researcher and co-author of the report, also participated on the panel. He agreed with Ryan on the scope of the problem and estimated that "no more than 10 percent of HIV-infected people in developing countries are aware of their infection."

Increasing the rate of testing in developing countries would have to be approached with caution, both Ryan and Nieburg said. They warned that expanded testing practices could become coercive.

The report itself warned that although raising awareness of HIV infection status is necessary for fighting the spread of the disease, discrimination against those with HIV/AIDS is a significant challenge. "The expansion of testing may aggravate stigma, discrimination, and risk of violence, particularly for vulnerable girls and women," the report said.

Both Ryan and Nieburg also said that strained health care resources are hampering efforts to provide HIV/AIDS support services in developing countries. Most of the hardest-hit regions are in underdeveloped countries that are unable to sustain a massive increase in services to fight HIV/AIDS.

Although much has been done to expand the reach of treatment to those with the virus, the CSIS report concluded, proper treatment "will remain out of reach for the majority of HIV-infected individuals for the foreseeable future."

Nonetheless, Ryan underscored the need to increase testing in all regions of the world to help prevent the continued spread of the disease by those unknowingly infected.

PRESS FREEDOM GROUPS PRAISE NICARAGUA, DECRY CUBA, ZIMBABWE

State Department criticizes composition of U. N.
human rights panel

By Eric Green

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The Nicaraguan government's vigorous investigation of the murder of a Nicaraguan journalist, and its prompt action to bring the principal suspect in the case to trial is being hailed by the Inter-American Press Association (IAPA) as a model to be followed elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere.

In a February 2 statement, the IAPA -- the Miami-based nonprofit, independent organization that promotes press freedom and expression in the Americas -- said the Nicaraguan action sets an example for other countries to follow "where murders of journalists have remained unsolved and unpunished for more than two decades."

The IAPA said María José Bravo, 26, a reporter for the newspaper La Prensa, was killed November 9, 2004, as she was covering a protest against the results of municipal elections in Juigalpa, located about 96 kilometers (60 miles) northeast of Nicaragua's capital of Managua. Eugenio Hernández González, the former mayor of a nearby town, was found guilty of the murder and sentenced January 28 to 25 years in prison.

Gonzalo Marroquín, chairman of IAPA's Committee on Freedom of the Press and Information, said that "the solidarity, accusation, and insistence of the Nicaraguan colleagues, the support of international press organizations that called for justice, and, mainly, the determination of the local courts to solve the crime prevented this murder [from] joining the long list of unpunished crimes in the Western Hemisphere."

Meanwhile, another journalistic advocacy group, Reporters Without Borders, has denounced as an "absurdity"

the fact that Cuba and Zimbabwe were selected as two of the judges for deciding which countries around the world are committing human rights violations.

In a February 4 statement, Reporters Without Borders deplored the “continuing farce” of “leading repressive countries” such as Cuba being chosen by the United Nations to decide which cases the U.N. Human Rights Commission will consider when it meets in March and April in Geneva.

The worldwide press freedom organization said that “this is a very grave matter and we don’t understand why the United Nations allows it. It would be comical if it wasn’t so serious.”

The U.S. State Department also denounced the selection of Cuba and Zimbabwe for the so-called “Working Group on Situations” that will decide the agenda for the U.N. Human Rights Commission meeting.

In a February 8 statement, the State Department said the United States “believes that countries that routinely and systematically violate the rights of their citizens should not be selected to review the human rights performance of other countries.”

The State Department added that “despite the inappropriate membership of Cuba and Zimbabwe, we look for the working group to conduct its procedures in a balanced and transparent manner.”

During her confirmation hearings to be U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice named Cuba and Zimbabwe, as well as Burma, North Korea, Iran and Belarus, as “outposts of tyranny.”

Rice said in her testimony January 18 before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, that the world should apply what human rights activist Natan Sharansky called the “town-square test” -- “if a person cannot walk into the middle of the town square and express his or her views without fear of arrest, imprisonment, and physical harm, then that person is living in a fear society.”

And “we cannot rest until every person living in a fear society has finally won their freedom,” Rice said.

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